



# Reflections

## Strengthening research's influence on adaptation policies in Africa

*As a research and capacity building program aimed at strengthening Africa's adaptation to climate change, CCAA gives priority to research that is relevant to policy. Through participatory action research, our projects link African scientists with policymakers, and generate knowledge useful for policy development.*

The program also interacts directly with a number of African policy-making bodies and regional processes to engage and inform decision-makers about climate change adaptation, and ensure partners' research contributions are taken into account.

Our approach to supporting policy-relevant research is based on the following assumptions:

- **Research processes and research results both influence policies, but in different ways.** The link between research and policy influence is not linear and depends on the openness of policy actors to research. By involving policymakers in the research process, PAR supports their stake in finding solutions, improves the sustainability of outcomes and strengthens relationships between policymakers and other stakeholders.
- **The skills researchers need to engage with policy processes can be learned, but need reinforcement.** In addition to favouring action research that involves policy institutions and decision-makers, we provide training in policy analysis and engagement, build networks and help our partners communicate their findings effectively.



Dr. Batilda Buriani, Tanzania's Minister of State for the Environment, addressing a 2009 climate change sensitization workshop for parliamentarians. The event was supported by CCAA through ICPAC.  
Photo: IDRC

- **Adaptation is essentially local, but requires support from diverse actors in policy-making at national and regional levels.** The most immediate impacts of many research projects are seen in local and district level decisions. Such immediate changes can be made by functionaries with delegated powers. To achieve wider influence, synthesis of results across a range of projects must reach higher level decision-makers and elected officials, such as those shaping national adaptation planning and investment.

## Policy influence of CCAA-supported research



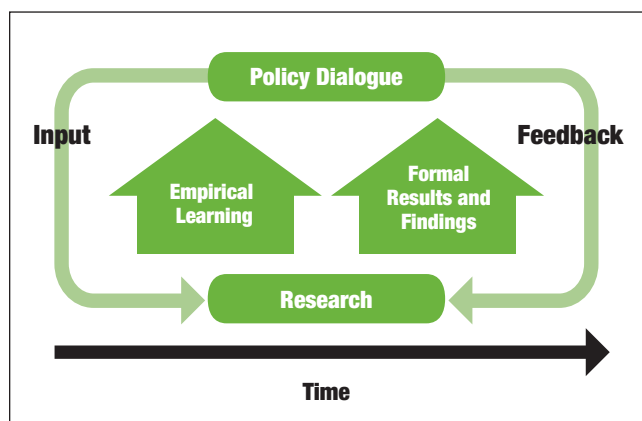
### Lessons learned

- The use of research in policy development is strengthened when policymakers are involved in the research process.
- Researchers have engaged policymakers successfully through existing committees and by creating new ones.
- Involving local and district level officials can bring fast and practical action that supports local adaptation.

Most action research teams supported by CCAA involved local, national or regional policymakers in project development. The sophistication of this engagement has increased with time, and seven out of eight recent projects on urban vulnerability include municipal government representatives in the research team. To date, about 40% of teams have received training on making links from research to policy, and more training is planned in 2010. Reports from the field indicate half of all projects already show clear evidence of policy engagement.

Project experience shows that engaging early with policymakers, to reflect their needs and priorities in the research agenda, enhances their ownership of research results. In some instances,

**Figure 1:**  
Research-policy interaction in CCAA-supported projects



Kenya's Meteorological Department has committed to preserving the indigenous forecasting practices of the Nganyi rainmakers of Western Kenya, based on CCAA-supported research led by ICPAC. A KSH 40 million resource centre is to be built in the community to sustain the links between local knowledge and seasonal climate forecasts. Photo: DFID and IDRC/Thomas Omondi

researchers have involved policymakers directly in research activities. In others, they created multi-stakeholder committees or built research activities around existing ones. In West Africa, for example, researchers led by Environment and Development Action in the Third World (ENDA) are reinvigorating regional dialogue on fisheries policy and injecting knowledge about climate change, working through the Sub-regional Fisheries Commission for West Africa, an existing regional body with a mandate to develop coherent cross-border policy.

Some projects have given input on national adaptation priorities through stakeholder committees. In Benin, researchers led by *Initiatives pour un Développement Intégré Durable* (IDID-ONG) established local early warning committees to enhance drought and flood preparation in 35 of the country's 77 *communes* (districts). The project team was subsequently invited by the Benin government to help identify community priorities in agriculture and energy as part of the National Water Partnership. A follow-up project under Benin's National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA) was inspired by IDID-ONG research and builds on its lessons.

In a number of instances, project teams have achieved practical results from sharing with policymakers important knowledge about adaptation gained from action research. In its work with traditional forecasters in Western Kenya, the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) drew commitments from a local member

of parliament (MP), civic leaders and the Kenya Meteorological Department, to build a resource centre to strengthen indigenous forecasting knowledge as part of local community development. In Senegal, the *Centre de Suivi Ecologique* has demonstrated that locally-based climate information centres improve planning and disaster risk management. They have seen their approach scaled up by an enthusiastic regional government in Thiès region. And in Iramba, Tanzania, district-level agriculture officials have budgeted to increase use of the *spring jembe* plough, after research plots proved its effectiveness in hard pan soils that result from drought and heavy rains.

## CCAA engagement with African policy processes



### Lessons learned

- The policy field in Africa is crowded, and involvement demands flexibility and responsiveness.
- We are most effective in the policy arena when responding to demands expressed by research partners or policy actors.

We engage directly with regional and sub-regional actors to ensure the issue of adaptation is visible and understood as a threat that can undermine African development targets. This is reflected in the composition of our Advisory Board, whose members are linked to the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the International Panel on Climate Change, and African leaders who make the environment a priority.

Since its inception, CCAA has hosted numerous policy outreach events, such as panels and networking events at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) annual Conference of Parties (COP). Our inception workshop in 2006 linked research teams, their policy partners and representatives of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union and the African Development Bank. We have also consulted with regional bodies, identifying areas where CCAA could build their capacity to act on climate change adaptation. For example, we provided training in climate risk



## Sharing farm innovations with policymakers in Malawi

A national consultative group established through research activities in Malawi brings together researchers, senior civil servants, NGO representatives and local leaders concerned with reducing farmers' vulnerability to climate change. The consultative group provides a channel for research findings to reach key ministries and inform local development plans. Based on field trial results, Malawi's Ministry of Water and Irrigation has increased distribution of treadle pumps to vulnerable farmers.



Photo: B. Chinsinga/Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

assessment to staff of the African Development Bank in 2008, and have shared institutional assessment studies of existing African expertise in climate change adaptation with NEPAD's interim environmental secretariat in Senegal and other regional bodies.

Our experience to date highlights the importance of responding to needs expressed by African policymakers, either directly or by supporting research teams. Our partners have demonstrated considerable agility in identifying policy needs and opportunities. We have gained valuable traction by supporting them in exploiting openings they have identified.





**Cape Verde President Pedro Pires (right), UN Resident Coordinator for Cape Verde Petra Lantz (centre), and MP Mamadou Lamine Thiam (left), President of Senegal's Parliamentary Network for Environmental Protection, address a regional seminar hosted by IUCN and supported by CCAA on climate change and coastal resources.**

*Photo courtesy of IUCN.*

In 2009, CCAA was approached by organizations that saw the need to sensitize African parliamentarians about climate change and adaptation issues. In August, we supported a regional seminar hosted in Cape Verde by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which engaged West African MPs and local leaders in discussions about climate governance. Attendees adopted a common position on protecting marine and coastal resources in the region, developed an action plan to raise awareness on climate change adaptation, and established a regional network to strengthen inter-parliamentary cooperation on environment and climate change issues.

ICPAC, a CCAA partner with an inter-governmental mandate, identified the need to engage East African parliamentarians. In November 2009, we supported them in bringing together MPs in Kenya and Tanzania who were interested in learning more about the implications of climate change. African governments have few resources for sensitization of elected representative on environmental issues. MPs in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda and South Africa have since expressed a similar interest.

At COP 14 in Poznan in December 2008, we made contact with regional bodies and multilateral organizations planning to support African negotiating capacity. We wanted to learn about the needs of

those negotiating for Africa, and what other organizations were doing. Staff met with representatives of the Africa Group within the UNFCCC, with UNEP representatives, including those with the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) secretariat, and *l'Institut de l'Energie des Pays Francophones* (IEPF), which was launching training for West African negotiators. Both the Africa Group and AMCEN representatives identified a need for technical support. But our research programming orientation and the many competing events associated with the UN COP preparatory process made it difficult for CCAA to respond.

However our explorations resulted in an invitation to contribute to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment's Third Special Session on Climate Change in May 2009. This session was part of the process of developing a unified African position on a post-Kyoto plan. We contributed a policy brief that synthesized preliminary research findings on the importance of sustaining diversity, indigenous knowledge, local governance and research to support adaptation.

CCAA experience confirms that responding to demand from policy institutions is crucial for meaningful engagement. This year's successful interactions with policy actors illustrate the growing recognition and confidence our partners are gaining in connecting research to policy needs.

## Looking ahead

We believe our role is to support research teams that have demonstrated policy traction and help bridge the gap between what research partners are learning and applying and the needs of key regional policy bodies.

We see an important opportunity to support the Southern African Development Community and regional river and lake basin commissions in integrating climate change adaptation into their activities. In 2010, we will support our research partners in building links with such regional organizations, creating opportunities for discussion about their adaptation findings as a way to broaden their application.